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State of South-South cooperation

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 72/237, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its seventy-third session, a comprehensive report on the state of South-South cooperation. The report focuses on support that the United Nations development system has provided to South-South initiatives of Member States at the national, regional and global levels in efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related international agreements in the biennium 2017–2018. In addition to highlighting the South-South policy dialogues, knowledge exchanges and partnerships that the United Nations development system has supported, the report points to constraints that need to be overcome and offers recommendations to pave the way forward.

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I. Introduction

1. Through its adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1] the world community has agreed on a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity, with the overarching goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda has created a sense of common purpose to ensure prosperity for all on an inclusive and healthy planet. The present report, along with my two previous reports on the state of South-South cooperation,[2] highlights the actions of the United Nations system in support of the efforts of developing countries to implement the new Agenda and their national priorities in the spirit of South-South solidarity.

2. The report highlights several positive trends that require the attention and sustained support of all stakeholders: (a) the measures taken by United Nations organizations to place South-South cooperation at the centre of their strategic priorities, following the wishes of developing countries to accelerate sustainable development on their own terms; (b) the promising efforts of United Nations organizations and Member States to turn South-South cooperation into a force to improve access by the global South to tested tools for poverty eradication, food security, industrial innovation and economic growth; and (c) the efforts to bolster South-South city-to-city cooperation, since 68 per cent of the world's population is projected to live in urban areas by 2050, including rapidly expanding areas of the global South.

3. As shown in the report, close to 30 United Nations entities have designed policies and programmes that draw on the expertise, experience, technology and many other resources that are available in the developing world. Increasingly, Member States receive the support of United Nations organizations for the convening of South-South policy dialogues, which are the wellspring of ideas on how best to eradicate poverty, hunger and other deprivations based on the policy solutions that developing countries have devised and found effective.

4. In addition, the report focuses on numerous innovative approaches, including South-South learning events, online platforms, networks, communities of practice and expert groups that United Nations organizations support to bolster the capacities of developing countries to manage their own development initiatives more effectively, highlighting the numerous South-South and triangular cooperation partnerships in which the organizations are actively engaged. Prominent aspects of these partnerships are the centres of excellence and trust funds that several countries have jointly established with various United Nations agencies to facilitate South-South exchanges in different areas.

5. Nurturing a culture of multilateral cooperation within and across regions remains at the heart of the work of the United Nations development system to advance global integration through South-South alliances. In this regard, the United Nations regional commissions have spearheaded South-South initiatives to establish or strengthen systems and mechanisms that are essential to effective decision-making at the national and regional levels. That work has also equipped the different regions with systems to gather and analyse statistical data and to monitor natural hazards and climate change challenges.

6. These developments come in tandem with an increase in international contributions for South-South cooperation for development, exceeding the $20 billion in contributions received in 2013: as a result of higher contributions from China, India

[1] Resolution 70/1.

[2] A/72/297 and A/71/208.

and Saudi Arabia from 2014 onwards, total contributions for South-South cooperation in 2018 may exceed the level received in 2013.

7. Despite the progress made, the report notes that knowledge gaps and administrative and financial hurdles have continued to hinder South-South cooperation from having optimal development impact. It also identifies the difficulties that some organizations have encountered in the monitoring and evaluation of their support for South-South and triangular cooperation. To overcome those constraints, some organizations have decided on a jointly planned approach to South-South cooperation and have developed tools, methodologies and guidance to better assess their engagement in this regard.

8. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for the consideration of Member States, along with other recommendation that I intend to present for consideration during the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, which is to be held in Buenos Aires from 20 to 22 March 2019, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

9. The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation has relied on information obtained from United Nations funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions in the preparation of this report, which is more illustrative than exhaustive in its presentation of the range of South-South initiatives supported by the organizations of the United Nations development system in the biennium 2017–2018.

II. Support of the organizations of the United Nations development system for South-South and triangular cooperation in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Integration and mainstreaming of South-South cooperation into policy frameworks and strategies of the United Nations development system

10. Many United Nations organizations have formalized their support for the flow of ideas, good practices, policy choices, technologies and other development solutions between developing countries as a central aspect of their workplans. This commitment is evident in the strategic frameworks, plans, work programmes and budgets of a number of United Nations organizations for the 2014–2017 and 2018–2021 periods,[3] which confirm that close to 30 United Nations entities embrace South-South cooperation as an effective modality to provide technical assistance, forge collaborative alliances, mobilize development finance and garner in-kind contributions for socioeconomic progress. In this regard, many United Nations organizations have established and/or strengthened specialized units and set up programmes with dedicated human and financial resources to promote South-South cooperation.

11. In November 2017, the South-South cooperation action plan was adopted at the twenty-third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations

[3] See A/72/297 and A/71/208 for details on how individual United Nations organizations have reflected their support for South-South cooperation in their respective strategic plans, frameworks and budgets.

Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Bonn, Germany, as part of the Secretary-General's climate change engagement strategy (2017–2021). The action plan, which is a strategic guide for United Nations system efforts on South-South climate cooperation, is supported and coordinated by the Office for South-South Cooperation.

12. To improve inter-agency coordination and coherence, three United Nations Rome-based organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), leverage South-South and triangular cooperation both individually and as a team in order to deliver on their shared mandate to improve access to an adequate supply of nutritious food.

13. For example: WFP supports the efforts of developing countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending hunger by 2030 by sharing empirical evidence on localized solutions and facilitating the mobilization of additional technical and capacity development support from other countries; IFAD recognizes South-South and triangular cooperation as a key area of work in its strategic framework for the 2016–2025 period; and FAO has taken measures to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation into its policy and operational work, to strengthen guidelines for South-South and triangular cooperation and to develop capacity support tools, including through targeted training and a related e-learning course for FAO staff.

14. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) supports South-South and triangular cooperation exchanges related to the environment through its leadership of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, an inter-agency collaboration that also draws on the expertise of four other United Nations organizations, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

15. In its strategic plan 2018–2021, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) affirms its role in supporting capacity development, sharing information and knowledge and enabling partnerships. In this context, UN-Women promotes South-South and triangular cooperation as an effective and efficient mechanism to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets to ensure the welfare of women and girls. Its strategy is also designed to make certain that countries have access to avenues for South-South cooperation and development solutions to bring about gender equality and women's empowerment, and that national institutions have strengthened capacities to forge new partnerships and leverage diverse sources of financing for South-South cooperation.

16. UNDP has mainstreamed South-South and triangular cooperation into its strategic plan and integrated results and resources framework for 2018–2021, in line with the commitments set forth in its publication "Accelerating Sustainable Development: South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve the SDGs", published in 2016. Moreover, its commitment is crucially linked to the opportunities and demands unleashed by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals, in 2015. This focus has been reinforced through the recent reform of the United Nations development system adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/279. These elements strengthen the role of South-South and triangular cooperation as a strategic approach within a reinvigorated United Nations development system that is better able to connect national efforts to regional and global networks of solidarity and support at the country level. Furthermore, the integrator function of UNDP, as shown, inter alia, in its country support platforms, offers a chance to deploy South-South and triangular cooperation at the core of

country-led efforts to address complex development problems to accelerate progress towards sustainable development. Country support platforms provide a potentially powerful tool to embed South-South and triangular cooperation within a wider network of partnerships and actions at the field level, based on a high degree of co-creation and co-ownership with United Nations and non-United Nations entities. The platforms thus enhance both the complementary role of South-South cooperation in traditional development assistance as well as its effectiveness in promoting transformational change. At the same time, the strong emphasis on platforms of innovation and experimentation and the exchange of knowledge, expertise and skills is particularly well suited to the ethos, purpose and practice of South-South and triangular cooperation. To that end, UNDP has developed country capacities to integrate the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and other international agreements into national development plans and budgets and to analyse progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals using innovative data-driven solutions.

B. Innovative approaches to United Nations support to South-South cooperation

17. There is growing consensus throughout the United Nations system that South-South learning and policy coordination and the transfer of expertise and technology are effective ways to accelerate sustainable development. The commitment to eradicating poverty and related deprivations has led many United Nations organizations to support South-South initiatives that benefit the least developed countries and low-income countries, as well as middle-income countries.

18. To catalyse the creation of knowledge-based jobs, the International Trade Centre (ITC) is building digital entrepreneurial skills in East Africa with expertise provided by its partners in India and Kenya. According to ITC, in the expanding Kenyan information technology sector, the skills gap has been exacerbated by a gender gap. As a solution, ITC is working with its partners to equip young people from across East Africa with the skills and experience needed to thrive in the fast-growing digital economy of the region. The ITC initiative #SheGoesDigital provides Kenyan women with a 40-day training programme in social media and digital marketing, followed by internships with companies seeking such skills. Another initiative, the Indo-East African Internship Programme, identifies promising East African information technology graduates and places them with Indian companies for three- to six-month internships, following which they return to their countries with improved skills and increased experience to contribute to the growth of vibrant technology sectors in the region.

19. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is supporting South-South and triangular cooperation to boost the capacity of women inventers. This addresses a clear need since, according to the 2017 WIPO Patent Cooperation Treaty Yearly Review, only 31 per cent of the patents filed with the organization included at least one female. Through a collaboration with the Korean Intellectual Property Office, WIPO has supported an international education programme on "Ideas, Invention, Innovation and Intellectual Property", which provides training to women in the use of intellectual property rights so that they may benefit from their own creativity.

20. IFAD has issued a publication on innovative ways to reduce poverty and alleviate its effects through the sharing of South-South knowledge and experience

within and across regions,[4] including support for the efforts of rural youth to identify and share solutions that have reduced poverty in rural Asia and Africa. These methods foster learning, knowledge-sharing and the scaling-up of practical solutions that have been field tested and validated for effectiveness in reducing poverty.

21. Making cities resilient to disasters through South-South and triangular cooperation is central to the work of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). A UNISDR-led campaign has supported city-to-city exchanges across countries to transfer knowledge and share good practices and lessons learned in making cities resilient to disasters. In the Americas, 15 city-to-city exchanges have taken place in Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and the United States of America.

22. To make new health technologies and treatments accessible to people who need them, the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID), hosted and administered by the World Health Organization (WHO), applies South-South cooperation approaches to connect entities responsible for developing innovations with the people who would benefit most from them, notably, people in resource-limited settings who are affected by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. By working with those institutions or actors, including researchers, academics, product-development partnerships, the private sector and others involved in research and development of modern technologies, UNITAID is helping to identify promising, close-to-market products that offer innovative health solutions.

23. In 2017, the Office for South-South Cooperation launched the Youth for South: Advanced Youth Leadership Programme, in partnership with the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, the Finance Centre for South-South Cooperation, the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, *Fredskorpset* (FK) Norway, IFAD and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The programme brings together young leaders from Governments and various sectors to learn and adapt South-South and triangular cooperation tools and methods to scale up sustainable development solutions in their local communities, institutions and countries. A pilot orientation session for the programme took place in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 2018 with the participation of 24 young professionals from 22 developing countries.

24. The United Nations Capital Development Fund, through its challenge funds, provides incentives to South-based financial service providers to direct their solutions to underserved markets in least developed countries and to share the lessons learned with other firms based in the global South. The Fund supports South-South learning and helps to create new markets and to reduce risks in public and private investments. It does so by supporting innovations in areas such as digital payments through its Mobile Money for the Poor and the MicroLead programmes, which target the 2 billion adults worldwide who lack access to financial services.[5] The Fund also brings financial services to hard-to-reach populations through the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme, jointly administered with UNDP, including funding from the European Union and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand.

25. The Technical Cooperation Programme of the International Atomic Energy Agency uses multiple mechanisms to promote South-South and triangular cooperation. Regional agreements, including the African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training, the Cooperative Agreement for Arab States in

[4] For more information see: https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40257372/youth_engagement.pdf/ba904804-060c-49ed-83c5-bd5d70a99335.

[5] See: http://www.uncdf.org/microlead/homepage.

Asia for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology, the Regional Cooperation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training in Nuclear Science and Technology for the Asia and Pacific, were all established with the specific aim of intensifying collaboration through the implementation of demand-driven technical cooperation projects.

C. Actions taken by the organizations of the United Nations development system in support of the efforts of Member States to achieve sustainable development through South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation

Policy dialogue and development

26. The number of South-South policy dialogues has grown significantly. Those supported by United Nations organizations during the reporting period include discussions on the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in international development cooperation as well as South-South cooperation to implement the 2030 Agenda through the lens of poverty eradication, trade and investment, regional integration, gender parity in entrepreneurship, capacity development and rapid urbanization.

27. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs supports multi-stakeholder policy dialogues as part of the Development Cooperation Forum organized every other year during the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. During the reporting period, the Department, together with the Government of Argentina, organized a high-level symposium of the Forum in Buenos Aires, from 6 to 8 September 2017, on the theme "South-South and triangular cooperation for achieving the 2030 Agenda: Building innovative and inclusive partnerships". The symposium served as an informal preparatory event for the 2018 high-level meeting of the Forum and for the upcoming Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation.

28. Economic growth and human development galvanized by enhanced South-South trade and investment are among the core topics for dialogues supported by UNDP and other United Nations entities. The Office for South-South Cooperation and UNDP, through the South-South Cooperation Global Thinkers Initiative, organized two workshops in 2017 and 2018 to discuss the policy and legal environment conducive to South-South investment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants at the two forums discussed the contributions of South-South investment with respect to the achievement of the Goals in Asia (August 2017) and in the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region (May 2018).

29. To promote regional and interregional cooperation in Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with key partners, organized the 2017 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to serve as the platform for the exchange of views and follow-up on the implementation of Agenda 2063, adopted by the African Union, and the 2030 Agenda. The Forum, which draws participants from other Southern countries in addition to African Union member States, serves as a continental platform for promoting peer learning and the exchange of solutions and best practices.

30. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has provided technical cooperation services to regional and subregional organizations to further strengthen their integration efforts. The Commission has made recommendations to

both the Andean Community and to the Union of South American Nations on how to increase intraregional trade among their members. In addition, the Commission has worked jointly with the Latin American Integration Association and the Andean Development Corporation on the establishment of the Latin America–Asia-Pacific Observatory to promote cooperation and strengthen links between the countries of both regions.

31. In 2017, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific facilitated a policy dialogue between women entrepreneurs and Government officials on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Business and Investment Summit, with a view to ensuring inclusive dialogue in the shaping of national economic and entrepreneurship policies. Participants from countries in the ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation regions discussed key barriers and innovative strategies to foster women's entrepreneurship across Asia and the Pacific.

32. To bolster equitable economic growth, IFAD organized an international conference on South-South and triangular cooperation in November 2017 entitled "Leveraging Innovations from the Global South to Support Rural Transformation". At the conference, which attracted 50 Government ministers, participants adopted the Brasilia Declaration and Action Agenda on South-South and triangular cooperation,[6] which outlines how they resolved to work together on specific areas to promote such cooperation as an instrument to help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

33. The opportunities and challenges posed by rapid urbanization have become a pressing concern in South-South dialogues. The Second Arab Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development was held in Rabat on 21 and 22 December 2017 to discuss the progress made in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the Arab States region. The Forum, attended by representatives from 20 Arab countries and other partners, provided a platform for reflection on persistent and emerging challenges facing Arab countries, the operationalization of the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

34. In 2017, UNFPA co-organized an international conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to hear perspectives from the South on sustainable cities, human development and international migration. Government ministers and 250 delegates from the 26 States members of the intergovernmental organization Partners in Population and Development attended the conference, which called for strengthening the use of population data for sustainable development.

35. In May 2017, WFP and China jointly organized the international symposium on demand-driven South-South cooperation. The objective was to translate the strategic vision of WFP to broker practical South-South endeavours through the matching of country-led demands with appropriate Chinese solutions to achieve the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 2. During the symposium, 38 proposals for South-South initiatives from different WFP country offices were collected.

Knowledge-sharing for capacity development

36. Many United Nations organizations support South-South cooperation in response to the requests for assistance from Member States to strengthen human and institutional capacities for the formulation and implementation of national

[6] See: https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714174/40212353/Brasilia+declaration+and+action+agenda_21NOV2017.pdf/256b4a83-dea0-42ee-928d-647421b9e670.

development policies and strategies. The South-South cooperation practices used to share knowledge, expertise and technology for human and institutional capacity development have increased in number, scope and complexity owing to a related rise in the number of actors and the challenges to be addressed.

37. Over time, the communities of practice and networks for economic, social and environmental South-South cooperation have grown to include professionals in various disciplines. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has partnered with institutions, including the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, to establish a community of practice on South-South cooperation for children. The aim is to leverage the strengths and capacities of the members of the community to promote and expand its outreach by engaging new practitioners.

38. In response to the capacity needs of the least developed countries, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change supports the work of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, which provides technical guidance to Governments on the formulation and implementation of their national adaptation plans on climate change. Such activities promote the sharing of experiences, best practices and lessons learned, as well as peer-to-peer learning through various modalities such as regional training workshops and the annual and regional expos on national plans, including case studies on the plans.

39. The growing use of online platforms, a breakthrough in the promotion of South-South cooperation, enables United Nations organizations to build stronger human and institutional capacities with partner networks for the sharing of knowledge, experience and various solutions. UNDP has created virtual centres of excellence for South-South cooperation. During the reporting period, the UNDP initiative for inclusive and sustainable new communities was implemented in the following six countries: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Rwanda, Uganda and Viet Nam. In two of those countries, the programme facilitated the establishment of virtual centres of excellence for South-South cooperation: one for Latin America and the Caribbean (http://cvis3.cebem.org/) and the other for Rwanda (http://fonerwa.org/ksp/).

40. In 2017, UNDP, under its Sustainable Development Goals Fund, launched an online library of good practices and lessons learned on the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, including those pertaining to South-South cooperation. The library links to publications from key United Nations agencies, development banks and academic institutions and hosts vast knowledge resources aimed at facilitating cooperation between developing countries and sharing their experiences in the implementation of joint programmes.

41. United Nations Volunteers programme has an Online Volunteering service that fosters South-South exchanges through the mobilization of volunteers from the global South to contribute to peace and development. The service connects organizations with online volunteers who contribute their skills over the Internet to strengthen the impact of peace and development work. The service is particularly notable for its promotion of inclusive South-South collaboration. In 2017, the volunteers, 70 per cent of whom (17,893 people) came from developing countries, supported non-governmental organizations, public institutions and United Nations agencies operating in the global South. Through its Online Volunteering service, the programme has connected 3,500 organizations directly to expertise across the world.

42. During the reporting period, the United Nations System Staff College has held an annual course in Bonn on how the United Nations can play a catalytic role in supporting South-South and triangular cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The course helps to ensure that the organizations of the United Nations development system has staff trained to promote South-South cooperation as part of

the Secretary-General's goal of repositioning the system to implement the 2030 Agenda.

43. The Office for South-South Cooperation engages United Nations organizations and Member States through its innovative web portal (www.unsouthsouth.org). The portal, which showcases the work of numerous partners on South-South and triangular cooperation in their respective focus areas, functions as a tool linking agencies and Governments, enabling them to share knowledge, locate experts and undertake outreach and advocacy on issues of critical importance to the South. The portal is available in three of the official United Nations languages and will be available in Arabic, Chinese and Russian by the end of 2018.

Partnership-building and innovative financing

44. Sustainable Development Goal 17 challenges the international community to leverage South-South partnerships as a means of applying science, technology and innovation to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda. Experience shows that these partnerships are essential to the mobilization of technical know-how, technology transfer, development finance and in-kind contributions for development. The establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, which was formally launched in the host country, Turkey, on 22 September 2017, was a significant achievement in the area of South-South technology transfer during the reporting period.

45. To better harness the complementary contribution of South-South partnerships to sustainable development, United Nations organizations and their partners have established a growing number of centres of excellence, financing facilities, trust funds and other mechanisms to maximize the development impact of South-South cooperation. For example, a notable trend is the establishment of centres of excellence and trust funds to spur greater South-South cooperation between emerging economies and other developing countries, revealing the role played by dynamic Southern economies as they shoulder greater global responsibilities in line with the principles of South-South solidarity. The WFP centres of excellence in Brazil and China provide a mechanism that facilitates the sharing of information on efforts to improve food security and nutrition.

46. The Economic Commission for Europe supports South-South and triangular cooperation through its International Public-Private Partnership Centre of Excellence. In pursuance of its goal to reduce the time and cost of facilitating the development and implementation of public-private partnerships, the Centre develops and disseminates international best practices and standards on such partnerships and provides training for public officials and other stakeholders.

47. The Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia, established in 2009 by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific through its Multi-Donor Trust Fund, is an intergovernmental institution owned and managed by its more than 30 member States and collaborating countries. The warning system enables member States to gather information at much lower costs than individual early warning systems, particularly for high-impact, low-frequency hazards.

48. A new innovative trust fund jointly established by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific supports an interregional partnership linking stakeholders in Asia and Latin America. Both Regional Commissions worked during the first half of 2017 with the cybersecretariat of the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation in the design of the trust fund to support projects that promote interregional cooperation among the 36 member States of the Forum. Collaborative relations centre on: trade

and investment promotion; science, technology and innovation; infrastructure and transportation; public policies and public-private partnerships for sustainable growth; and public policies to reduce inequality and improve social cohesion.

49. Funding facilities are an additional mechanism that many United Nations organizations establish with public and or private partners to support South-South cooperation. In early 2018, IFAD and the Ministry of Finance of China signed a supplementary funds agreement establishing the China-IFAD South-South and Triangular Cooperation Facility to further strengthen IFAD engagement in this kind of cooperation. The activities to be funded by the Facility include knowledge exchange in areas under the IFAD mandate and capacity-building for policymakers, development practitioners, project staff, non-governmental organizations and others in developing countries. These activities also include resource mobilization from the private sector in China and other developing countries and the promotion of rural South-South investments through the identification of rural investment opportunities in the global South, such as public-private partnerships and business-to-business links across developing countries.

50. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) uses multi-stakeholder partnerships to upgrade slums. It promotes its Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme through collaboration with the European Commission and the secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. Through the programme, UN-Habitat has reached out to 35 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including 160 cities. It has provided the necessary enabling framework for improving the lives of at least 2 million slum dwellers, based on its core principle of "leaving no one behind".

51. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) integrates South-South cooperation into its overall partnership engagement with actors who offer support for finding a solution to the refugee situation. Strengthening and diversifying such partnerships constitute one of the UNHCR strategic priorities for the 2017–2021 period.[7]

United Nations support to regional and interregional South-South initiatives

52. Many of the South-South activities supported by organizations of the United Nations development system enable developing countries to nurture a culture of multilateral cooperation to address shared regional and global challenges. South-South cooperation is also essential to administrative and decision-making processes, including the provision of collaborative frameworks and cross-border and interregional programmes, as well as standards, regulatory arrangements, implementation mechanisms and many other public goods. For example, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction facilitates South-South and triangular cooperation through the exchange of good practices and expertise at the global and regional levels, mainly through regional and global platforms on disaster risk reduction. The Office also supports the strengthening of the capacity of regional intergovernmental organizations in all regional economic communities that have integrated disaster risk reduction programmes and monitors the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as a basis for their internal programmes and policies and subregional strategies.

53. During the reporting period, the Economic Commission for Africa supported the establishment of "Solution Exchange Africa", a community of practice that involves South-South exchanges of knowledge for African professionals (http://solutionexchange-un.net/Africa). The exchange has 801 members, including African development

[7] See: http://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf.

planners (52 per cent of the total) from 51 African countries, and representatives of African statistical communities (48 per cent of the total) from 22 African countries.[8] The Commission also led the collaboration on the establishment of the Consortium to Stem Illicit Financial Flows from Africa. Through cooperation with the Centre for Trade Policy and Law at Carleton University in Ottawa, the Commission provides technical assistance to African member States and their stakeholders in the design, negotiation and implementation of international trade and economic development strategies.

54. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has used its policy forums, knowledge and practitioner networks and capacity-building activities to assist many developing countries, with a special focus on the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Through the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific, the Commission convened experts from Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand to share experiences and good practices in establishing single-window and paperless trade solutions with Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mongolia. In addition, with the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Commission organized capacity-building activities for research and technical training sessions as well as workshops on trade agreements in the region.

55. To boost the capacity of national statistics offices in Latin America, the Latin America and Caribbean Demographic Centre of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has continued to improve its interactive computer software for the retrieval of data for small areas by microcomputer (REDATAM), which is used for processing and mapping census and survey data for local and regional analysis to provide technical assistance and support to national statistical offices. At the present time, there are approximately 1,600 registered users of the software.

56. In May 2017, ILO constituents in the Africa region adopted the "South-South Cooperation and Decent Work in Africa", a framework for action in the context of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The framework provides for the creation of a South-South Cooperation Coordination Facility in Africa.[9] In addition, ILO and the Government of China have facilitated regional learning between China and member States of ASEAN, including knowledge-sharing on employment services among the ASEAN "Plus Three" countries.

57. The WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil has promoted initiatives focused on capacity-strengthening services in Zero Hunger approaches. The Centre also supported the work of the African Union to establish its Pan-African school feeding network, which enables countries in the region to engage as solution providers and solution seekers in peer-learning initiatives.

58. WHO has responded to the requests of Member States to strengthen the capacity of international relations officers on health-related diplomacy in the Latin America region. The Pan American Health Organization created a programme to strengthen cooperation on health issues in the Americas in partnership with the Center for International Relations in Health of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, which promotes collaboration for global health and South-South cooperation. Representatives of 33 member States participated in a related training programme on areas including diplomacy and health cooperation, global health challenges, global health

[8] See: https://www.uneca.org/stories/eca-launches-african-statistical-community.

[9] International Labour Organization, "South-South Cooperation for Decent Work in Africa (framework for action)", March 2017.

governance, health in regional and subregional integration processes and health issues in foreign policy in the Americas.

59. Some United Nations organizations employ South-South cooperation approaches in the provision of consultancy and other services in emergency situations. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), through its Technical Support Facilities, provides rapid and expert technical consultancy support from the nearest sources to countries requiring assistance in responding to the AIDS epidemic.

60. UNHCR has facilitated visits among representatives of Governments participating in the United Nations comprehensive refugee response framework[10] so that they may learn from one another. In this regard, Uganda welcomed a mission from Ethiopia, Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania to exchange knowledge and good practices.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

61. Many United Nations entities encounter difficulties in monitoring and evaluating their support for South-South initiatives, but some have designed methodologies to assess performance and measure the impact of their various interventions. FAO, IFAD and WFP, have adopted a collaborative approach to the monitoring and evaluation of South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives based on their common vision and complementary approaches for delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the three agencies have agreed to elaborate indicators based on the 2030 Agenda for use in measuring South-South and triangular cooperation projects and programmes in their respective areas of competence. FAO has developed a global database of its South-South and triangular initiatives, which is publicly accessible on its website and searchable on an interactive map (http://www.fao.org/south-south-gateway/en/).

62. In the Americas, the Committee on South-South Cooperation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean supports the efforts of member States to better define, monitor, evaluate and report on their South-South and triangular cooperation endeavours. The technical secretariat of the Committee presents a biennial report on South-South and triangular cooperation activities at the sessions of the Commission.

63. At UNFPA, planning and monitoring mechanisms for South-South cooperation have been put in place through an internal planning and reporting tool, the Strategic Information System. Using this online application, field offices are able to input and articulate their use of South-South cooperation to achieve results, and to track progress. Furthermore, in its resource planning system, UNFPA has instituted a financial "tag" to track expenditures on South-South cooperation. UNDP tracks contributions to South-South cooperation at the country level in a similar manner, through its annual reports, as well as through its integrated results and resources framework, which features a dedicated global South-South output indicator and a South-South cooperation "marker".

64. In the previous UNICEF strategic plan for 2014–2017, contributions and results for South-South cooperation were tracked and reported through the annual reports of the country offices, which included a specific section on engagement in South-South cooperation.

[10] Resolution 71/1, annex I.

D. Institutional and operational constraints that United Nations organizations encounter in optimizing their support for South-South cooperation

65. A 2018 United Nations inter-agency survey by the Office for South-South Cooperation shows that the lack of an Organization-wide strategy is the main factor that hinders optimal support to South-South cooperation at the policy and operational levels in several agencies. The low level of core funding for South-South cooperation also hampers an effective response to the numerous requests by Member States for United Nations assistance. The fact that a limited number of staff are assigned to this growing area of work presents another challenge, as does inadequate knowledge about South-South cooperation modalities in some organizations of the United Nations system. Moreover, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has highlighted the difficulty of identifying partners in the South with expertise in countering terrorism.

66. At the country level, poor coordination among agencies frequently leads to unclear roles while the differing perceptions of Headquarters and country offices and teams often pose challenges. Implementation processes are further complicated by the multiplicity of partners and diverging interests in South-South initiatives. The identification and matching of the supply of South-South capacities and demands through the use of online platforms is a costly undertaking, often constrained by budgetary shortfalls. The United Nations system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation that the Office for South-South Cooperation is coordinating in consultation with other United Nations entities should help to alleviate some of these constraints.

III. Enhanced coordination and coherence of the support of the United Nations development system to South-South cooperation

67. In 2018, the Office for South-South Cooperation prepared its strategic framework for 2018–2021, with a portfolio of activities aimed at enhancing the coherence and coordination of support to South-South and triangular cooperation across the United Nations development system. The strategic framework, which was presented to the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Office for Project Services in June 2018, builds on the views expressed by Member States during various consultations and on the measures to further strengthen the Office, as articulated in my report to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation (SSC/19/3).

68. In implementing the framework, the Office for South-South Cooperation is focusing its work on enabling Member States to make informed policy choices for South-South and triangular cooperation and the effective coordination of United Nations support to that cooperation. The Office also has committed to assisting Member States as they develop capacities through the sharing of South-South knowledge and experiences and the forging of strategic South-South and triangular partnerships to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

69. The Office for South-South Cooperation, in response to the directives of Member States, has held intergovernmental and inter-agency consultations, including on the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation to be held in 2019. These consultations have yielded many ideas that are guiding the ongoing preparatory work for the conference.

70. As requested by Member States, a formalized and strengthened inter-agency coordination mechanism has been created. Coordinated by the Office for South-South

Cooperation, the mechanism encourages joint support to South-South and triangular initiatives and the sharing of information on development activities and results achieved. A total of 27 United Nations entities have already nominated focal points to the mechanism, which will also support the development of a system-wide South-South cooperation strategy and substantive inputs from the entities of the United Nations development system to inform discussions among Member States in preparation for the High-level Conference in 2019.

71. As mentioned above, the Office for South-South Cooperation is coordinating the implementation of the action plan for South-South cooperation of my climate change engagement strategy (2017–2021). The action plan is being rolled out through strengthened collaboration among entities of the United Nations development system and enhanced partnerships among various stakeholders.

72. The Office has continued to convene the annual Global South-South Development Expo and related inter-agency meetings. In 2017 the Expo was hosted by the Government of Turkey. More than 800 delegates from over 120 Member States took part in the four-day event, attending 37 sessions and presenting more than 200 solutions. The next Expo, marking 10 years since the first one in 2008, will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 28 to 30 November 2018.

73. The Office for South-South Cooperation has intensified the forging of partnerships to support Member States in enhancing and expanding their South-South initiatives. The Office has entered into partnership agreements with: national entities of 12 Member States; 23 United Nations and intergovernmental organizations; and 12 civil society organizations, foundations and academic institutions.

74. Together with Government and United Nations partners, the Office for South-South Cooperation has mapped, documented and disseminated development solutions in nine issues of its "South-South in Action" series, and over 20 additional issues are currently in production. The Office has also compiled two publications on good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation, outlining over 100 Southern solutions across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

75. The Office for South-South Cooperation web portal (www.unsouthsouth.org) has linked United Nations agencies and Governments, facilitating engagement, the sharing of knowledge, as well as outreach and advocacy on issues of critical importance to the South. In addition, 14 United Nations system partners are showcasing South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in their respective focus areas using the web portal.

76. In response to my call, the Office for South-South Cooperation is supporting the preparation of the first independent report on South-South and triangular cooperation. The report will review the history and transformation of collaborative frameworks for such cooperation, and how they can be further supported, including how they can contribute towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, given its global context. The report will contribute to deliberations at the Second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation.

77. During the reporting period the Office for South-South Cooperation signed two partnership agreements with institutes of Peking University: the first agreement, with the Center for New Structural Economics, supports the launch of a global coalition of *think tank networks for South-South cooperation*; and the second, with the Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development, promotes youth leadership and capacity development through South-South cooperation and supports the establishment of a "South-South Cooperation and United Nations Chairs" lecture series.

78. At the regional level, the Division for Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States of the Office for South-South Cooperation has continued to

convene regional networking forums as a space for stakeholders to share knowledge on best practices and deepen their understanding of the role of South-South cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The fourth forum, held in Istanbul in June 2018, focused on how the private sector could be engaged to contribute to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda through South-South and triangular cooperation. The Division has, in collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College, trained representatives of technical cooperation agencies and national focal points for South-South cooperation on the trends, models and benefits of South-South cooperation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the Division has published good practices on South-South cooperation and regional reports on its value for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Division has also taken stock of trends and opportunities for such cooperation in Djibouti, Georgia and Montenegro.

79. The Division for Asia-Pacific of the Office for South-South Cooperation has a designed space on the Office's web portal that facilitates knowledge exchanges and provides information on national and United Nations agency focal points for South-South cooperation, including events relevant to South-South cooperation in the region. Further to its participation in the Regional Coordination Mechanism on collaboration between the United Nations and ASEAN, the Division is mapping major South-South initiatives in the region. It has worked with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to hold consultative meetings in the Asia-Pacific region on the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation and assisted the Commission in launching a regional forum for directors of development cooperation on South-South cooperation matters.

80. The Office for South-South Cooperation has continued to manage trust funds for South-South cooperation and to support demand-driven South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives. In 2017, India made an unprecedented contribution to the trust funds managed by the Office with the launch of the $100 million India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund. Over the past year, 22 projects have been approved in 25 partner countries to support South-owned, demand-driven sustainable development. India has offered an additional $50 million for projects in member States of the Commonwealth. The Office also has provided catalytic resources to support collaborative projects on climate change and other priority areas in developing countries.

81. The United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, which has received $8.7 million in contributions, has implemented those resources through eight global projects. In addition, the Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation, a dedicated trust fund within UNDP created by the Governments of Brazil, India and South Africa, has received $2 million in contributions and has implemented approximately $3.5 million through 10 projects; and the Pérez-Guerrero Trust Fund, with $0.34 million in contributions, has implemented $0.42 million through 26 projects.[11]

82. A review conducted by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit in 2018 found that most of the United Nations entities it had surveyed appreciated the leadership and coordination role performed by the Office for South-South Cooperation in anchoring South-South and triangular cooperation across the United Nations development system.[12]

83. The Office for South-South Cooperation has strengthened the programme management, monitoring and evaluation of its new strategic plan in line with the

[11] For more information on fund management, see https://www.unsouthsouth.org/our-work/south-south-trust-fund-management/.

[12] JIU/REP/2018/2, "Progress report on the recommendations contained in the Review of South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system (Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2011/3))".

recommendations of the final evaluation of its strategic framework for 2014–2017. It has implemented all 16 recommendations on its activities submitted by the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations in its 2016 audit, including the clarification of management relationships, reporting lines and functions to improve transparency, accountability and efficiency.[13] In this context, the Office has also implemented the recommendations of the UNDP management consulting team to ensure that its staffing profile matches its core mandates and to enhance its impact across the United Nations system. To improve its operational effectiveness, the Office has also adopted a clearer distribution of responsibilities among staff.

84. In addition, the Office for South-South Cooperation has set up a Programme Support Unit headed by a Deputy Director to ensure that all operations are consistent with UNDP policies and procedures and has taken steps to achieve better gender parity. In line with UNDP standards and procedures, the Unit has fostered the transparency and accountability of the Office through the submission to UNDP of an integrated workplan for the Office as part of the annual resources plan of the organization.

85. In further efforts to improve transparency and accountability, and as recommended by the 2016 audit, the Office for South-South Cooperation has designed a comprehensive office-wide evaluation plan to track and report on progress towards the goals set out in its strategic framework. In this regard, the Office is following the guidelines set out in UNDP policies and procedures. In response to calls from Member States for coherent United Nations support to their development initiatives, the activities under the new strategic framework are to be aligned with the strategic frameworks and plans of relevant organizations of the United Nations development system.

86. To avoid working in silos, the Office for South-South Cooperation also has continued to leverage the vast network of UNDP country offices, United Nations organizations and country teams as well as the network of national and United Nations focal points for South-South cooperation. These partners enable the Office to catalyse the integration of South-South approaches to development into various development policies and programming tools, including the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks at the country level. Specifically, the Office has signed innovative partnership agreements with the Governments of Honduras and Panama and with the United Nations country teams in those countries. These agreements serve to coordinate the work of the Office and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes working with Government entities to promote and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through expanded South-South and triangular cooperation.

87. The Office for South-South Cooperation will continue to prepare reports of the Administrator of UNDP containing assessments of its work for review at the biennial sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. The General Assembly will monitor and assess United Nations system-wide support to South-South and triangular cooperation based on the information submitted by the Office as contained in the annual reports of the Secretary-General. In addition, the Office will summarize its work in the reports of the UNDP Administrator submitted to the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of the UNDP strategic plan, and will report to the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Office for Project Services on its compliance with Executive Board decision 2018/5.

[13] See United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Office of Audit and Investigations, Report No. 1754, February 2017, "Audit of United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation".

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

88. South-South cooperation has galvanized the efforts of various actors in the global South to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I welcome the expanded engagement of United Nations organizations to leverage the collaborative spirit of South-South cooperation to facilitate exchanges of expertise and technology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

89. I further welcome the partnerships, trust funds and centres of excellence that countries of the South establish to bolster South-South collaboration; these are viable avenues for achieving sustainable development in the spirit of South-South solidarity.

90. The professionals who organize themselves into think tanks, communities of practice, networks and expert groups to foster South-South experiential learning and other exchanges present real opportunities to improve human and institutional capacity development in the global South. I encourage United Nations organizations to help to direct the pooled expertise of these professionals towards the continued implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets through collaborative mechanisms at the national and subnational levels.

91. The report highlights the evolving extension of South-South cooperation beyond exchanges among and within countries to embrace its multi-stakeholder nature. This trend makes South-South cooperation more inclusive, and I call upon United Nations organizations to conduct feasibility studies and/or to provide knowledge products that are essential to the equitable implementation and success of large-scale South-South programmes.

92. I welcome the expansion in South-South policy dialogues on ways to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations development system should help to optimize the development impact of South-South and triangular cooperation through support for the systematic implementation of the agreements reached during such policy dialogues while reporting the results to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

93. I request the Office for South-South Cooperation to continue its management of the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, a mechanism that is accessible to other United Nations partner entities, to mobilize resources to advance South-South initiatives.

94. To further improve the coherence and coordination of United Nations support to South-South cooperation, I call upon the Office for South-South Cooperation to coordinate, in consultation with the United Nations agencies, the preparation of a United Nations system-wide South-South cooperation strategy.[14] I also request the Office to organize regular inter-agency meetings to share knowledge and experiences and to disseminate information on the South-South activities of each organization based on their relevant core competences and mandates.

95. I reiterate my recommendation that the United Nations system provide substantive inputs to inform discussions among the Member States in preparation for the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, to be held in 2019, through the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, the secretariat of the preparatory process.

[14] A/72/297, para. 94.